

# The Hampton Court Conference, January 1604

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The Hampton Court Conference was summoned for January 1604 and indeed met for three mornings on Saturday 14, Monday 16 and Wednesday 18 January. The new king, James I of England, was present throughout the sessions, along with his councillors, a number of bishops and deans, and four clergymen, usually regarded as "puritans". It is generally represented as a struggle between the bishops and the "puritans", resulting in a complete victory for the prelates. This was due to the favour shown them by the king, who finally drove the "puritans" from his presence with contumely. There was no official report, but something like one soon emerged from the pen of Dean William Barlowe. This at once established itself as the authoritative story of the conference and was so accepted down to modern times. At the beginning of the present century, R. G. Usher initiated a search in the Public Record Office and discovered a number of papers bearing on the issue. He printed some of these in his work, *The Reconstruction of the English Church*, published in 1910,<sup>1</sup> but he did not attach great importance to any of the documents. One of the items is anonymous and therefore, in Usher's view, cannot command the same reliance as Barlowe's work. In 1960, Mark H. Curtis took a fresh look at the manuscripts unearthed by Usher.<sup>2</sup> He found that they modified Barlowe's story, though not to any great extent. The familiar story still remains essentially unchallenged. A reconsideration of the documents to which Curtis drew further attention is, however, overdue.

Barlowe professed to use documents which had already appeared and only to correct some misstatements. In fact, he was heavily dependent on them and made no substantial alterations. The documents themselves seem to be not independent productions and take the form of a series, each growing out of its immediate predecessor. First, there is *An Anonymous Account in favour of the Bishops*; next there is *A declaration of the conference had before the king*;<sup>3</sup> and finally, Barlowe's *Summe and Substance*, which is confessedly based on preceding documents or "copies", as he calls them.<sup>4</sup> An initial difficulty is that it is impossible to find in them any clue to their authorship

1 R. G. Usher, *The Reconstruction of the English Church* (London, 1910).

2 M. H. Curtis, "The Hampton Court Conference and its Aftermath", *History the Journal of the Historical Association*, xlv, no. 156 (February, 1961), 1-14.

3 Usher, *Reconstruction of the English Church*, ii, 335, 341ff.

4 W. Barlow, *The Summe and Substance of the Conference* . . . (1604).

or date. This is not so serious an obstacle, for all these papers were undoubtedly written within a few weeks of one another, immediately after the end of the conference. All tell the same story and treat it from the same point of view. There are no great differences, other than amplifications, by which they can be checked against one another. They clearly belong together as a group.

The subject of all these documents is a conference, for which there had long been a widespread demand. Whenever Christians found themselves in disagreement, it was natural for them to get together to discuss their differences. The New Testament showed how this could be done. In England under Queen Elizabeth, there were plenty of disagreements not only with Roman Catholics, not only with Lutherans, but also among protestants themselves. The acts of parliament dealing with religion in 1559 required all subjects to recognise the queen as Supreme Head on earth of the Church of England<sup>5</sup> and, for purposes of worship, to use the second Prayer Book of Edward VI, with some small amendments. Beyond this, much else was debatable. For a start, the clergy received no written or printed instructions but were summoned to local meetings with the justices, who informed them what the government's wishes were. Many people ignored these instructions and, confident that Roman Catholicism would soon be in the ascendant again, continued openly to follow its teaching and practices. There was thus a vast amount of diversity in the land, and in January 1565, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker, received a peremptory letter, purporting to come from the queen, rebuking him for this diversity and requiring him in no uncertain terms to put a stop to it. It appears beyond doubt that the Roman Catholics were among the leading instigators of this attack. As a result, Parker produced, as rapidly as he could, a set of rules on such matters as ceremonies and vestments. To these were appended certain articles to be subscribed by all candidates for the ministry, and one consisted of a declaration that the Prayer Book contained nothing repugnant to the Word of God. The intention was certainly to exclude Roman Catholics from the ministry of the church, but in the event it turned out to be a stumbling-block for protestants. They were willing to accept and preach the royal supremacy over the church and to signify their agreement with its doctrine, but it was harder for them to make a solemn affirmation about the contents of a book which some may not even have seen. Subscription was not required by act of parliament or Royal Injunction. The demand appeared to be based on no other authority than that of the bishops. Those who resisted were soon in trouble, and some were deprived of their

5 For a discussion of the queen's legal title, see M. A. Simpson, *Defender of the Faith Etcetera* (Edinburgh, 1978), 128ff.

benefices. The church was divided, and there was no lack of ill-will to exploit the situation.

Protestants looked to the queen as supreme authority for relief and sought to approach her in parliament. Their point was well made in William Fulke's *Brief and plain declaration concerning the desires of all those faithful ministers that have and do seek for the discipline and reformation of the church of England*: "We can think of no way for reconciling the brethren at variance . . . than the . . . following. . . : it may please her most excellent Majesty and their Honors to appoint on both sides, the best learned, most godly and moderate men, to debate all differences of weight between them and us."<sup>6</sup>

Scottish ministers also added their voice to the demand for a brotherly conference. "The controversie," wrote John Davidson of Prestonpans in his work, *Dr Bancroft's Rashness in Railing*, "should be decided by the Word of God in a lawful Assemblie and brotherlie conference, appointed by the supreme magistrate to that effect. Otherwise, if this come not to passe, (which God forbid,) . . . we must not leave the just defence of our honest cause of Christian Discipline, which (touching the substance thereof. . .) hath no less warrand to be continued perpetually within the Church . . . then hath the preaching of the Worde, and ministration of the Sacraments".<sup>7</sup>

Such pleas continued throughout Elizabeth's reign, and they were strongly supported by bishops, statesmen and magnates, but they were uniformly unsuccessful. The source of this opposition is usually found in the queen, but a careful inquiry fails to substantiate this view. Elizabeth was a woman who loved her own pleasure and would seldom put herself to much trouble to rectify abuses in church or state. But she was surrounded by men who knew how to make use of her. The queen's name, as one critic vividly put it, was "the common pack-horse to carry many a varlet's trumpery".<sup>8</sup> Many of the ecclesiastics who had access to her were against any reform. The arguments of the reformers were fiercely controverted in the universities. But the most deeply interested opponents of reform and among the most wealthy and influential were the ecclesiastical lawyers, the lay Doctors of the Civil Law, who practised in the courts spiritual and exercised

6 W. Fulke, *A Brief and Plain Declaration* . . . reprinted in L. J. Trinterud, *Elizabethan Puritanism* (New York, 1971), 240. (Fulke's work, like many others of the time, remained in manuscript, and was freely available for copying. Modern editors say that when it was printed in 1584, it had probably been edited by an alleged "central committee of publication" of the "puritan party" and furnished with a preface, written by John Field; but I remain unconvinced of this and continue to quote it as a work of about 1573.)

7 *Wodrow Miscellany*, ed. D. Laing (Edinburgh, 1844) i, 519f.

8 *The Seconde Parte of a Register*, ed. A. Peel (Cambridge, 1915), ii, 233.



jurisdiction not only over cases of religion and morals but also over those involving matrimony, wills and inheritance and even over shipwrecks and other maritime matters. These lawyers were accustomed to fight for their privileges and conceal their activities. There were incessant complaints against these chancellors, commissaries and officials, and as they owed their jurisdiction to the church and not to the state, the blame for many of their corruptions was visited on the bishops.

When some scholars started teaching that in the ancient church disputes among Christians and cases of misconduct on their part were never referred to single judges or to laymen but to panels known as elderships or seniorities — presbyteries in the Greek —, the whole of this powerful corporation took alarm and, in co-operation with some churchmen, set in motion the machinery of defence. A presbytery, meaning essentially what is now called a session, became a bogey, and the world was ransacked for example of its malign influence. One immediately came to hand in Scotland. Richard Bancroft, the rising young man of the Church of England, already had his agents there and received reports from them. He sent to Scotland a series of questions about recent happenings there. These questions were not necessarily hostile. Many of them can be read as friendly inquiries about how the presbyteries actually worked, and there are some whose answers are still not known; but there are others which show what really concerned him. Some examples may suffice: “. . . 6. Whether they have in their consistoreis anie sett jurisdiction (i.e., any recognised law)? Whether the king be exempted from their censures? . . . 9. What maner of causes be they, wherewith all the consistorians doe not meddle. . . ? 12. What place have the ministers and consistoriall elders there in parliament? Whether have they voices in all kinds of causes, or in ecclesiastical onlie? 16. [In case of a conflict with the king] Whether may the ministers proceed against his Majestie with their ecclesiasticall censures. . . ? 20. . . . How are their censures generally feared; and what great reformation of manners doeth thereby appear. . . ? 22. Whether is Buchanan's treatise *De Jure Regni apud Scotos* approved there by the consistorians. . . ? 23. How have the ministers dealt with the king from tyme to tyme?”<sup>9</sup>

The English ecclesiastical courts, corrupt as they might be, had their place in society and operated within recognised limits. It was especially clear in what relationship they stood to the government, parliament and monarch. If all these courts were to be swept away, new machinery had to be devised to take their place.

Bancroft's questions are undated. Calderwood assigns them to

9 D. Calderwood, *The History of the Kirk of Scotland*, ed. T. Thomson (Wodrow Soc., Edinburgh, 1842-9), v, 77.

1590, but the results of the inquiries had already been incorporated into Bancroft's sermon delivered in 1589 at Paul's Cross in London. In it, the ministers were charged with having altered the laws of the land in defiance of king and estates, with having rejected the king's supremacy, erected an ecclesiastical tyranny producing faction, sedition, confusion and rebellion, and having introduced anabaptism. The evils were so manifest that the king had been compelled to abolish the presbyteries. Bancroft had been informed by Robert Browne, the separatist, that "he had known the king to be in great danger and feare of his life by their Lordlie Discipline, the nobles and people at great discord and much distracted, and yet all men made slaves to the preachers and their fellowe-elders".<sup>10</sup>

The sermon was disseminated in print and provoked a reply from John Davidson of Prestonpans, denouncing not bishops but "loftie Lordes, wrongfully called Bishops", and extolling the English brethren who were seeking the restoration of "the joynt administration of Christian discipline by the ministers and elders of the churche . . . established by the Word of God".<sup>11</sup> Bancroft's sermon was held to reflect on King James, and he was compelled to offer a submission as far as his words applied to the king, and no doubt this made him more circumspect in future, but he had already accumulated sufficient ammunition, and the Hampton Court Conference gave him the opportunity to use it.

The death of Queen Elizabeth and the accession of James in 1603 had long been foreseen, and everyone was preparing for it. As soon as it happened, petitions addressed to the new king began to appear in abundance, many on the subject of religion. These were not hasty or ill-considered productions. If one looks at the best-known of them, the "Millenary", one is still struck by its careful choice of topics and its mild and measured language. It did not demand a conference. It directed the king's attention to abuses alleged to prevail in the church and assured him that the petitioners could show these practices or rules "not to be agreeable to the Scriptures, if it shall please your Highness further to hear us, or more at large by writing to be informed, or by conference among the learned to be resolved". The king was thus left free to choose his own method of handling the problem. The opposition was still very strong. In this very year, the ecclesiastical lawyers had shown that they could stultify the efforts of the High Commission with the co-operation of some bishops to clear up the corruptions of their courts. Even more bitterness was displayed by the universities of Oxford and Cambridge at the suggestion, barely hinted at in the petition but actively countenanced by the king, that benefices impropriated to the

<sup>10</sup> R. M. Gillon, *John Davidson of Prestonpans* (London, 1936), 97f.

<sup>11</sup> *Wodrow Miscellany*, i, 505-20.

crown and to colleges should be returned to their rightful owners. Yet the king accepted the petitions and announced his intention of holding a conference to review all the grievances reported to him. He has sometimes been censured for so weakly giving in to the "puritans", but nothing is said in the documents about "puritans", and his action should rather be reckoned to his credit. Never before in 45 years had the monarch given a courteous hearing to his subjects' complaints. And when the conference began, he showed himself a diligent and interested participant. He was regularly present at its sessions, and he rebuked even the bishops when they overstepped their bounds. The idea that he talked incessantly and for his own glory is derived from writers who were out to flatter him, and there are indications that councillors and other laymen were also allowed to give their advice. The reports of his outbursts against presbyteries come from dubious sources.

It seems that it was the king who nominated the members of the conference, but the councillors, judges, bishops and deans were also present in virtue of their offices. To leave any of them out would have been regarded as a slight. Archbishop Whitgift was already unequal to his duties and left Bancroft, who was to succeed him as primate, as the chief spokesman on their side. Barlowe names four ministers, all heads of colleges at Oxford or Cambridge, as spokesmen for the petitioners. There appears to have been no prearranged agenda or any reference to written petitions, but various persons were invited to state their grievances. The king was at the centre of it all. He is represented as taking an active and learned part throughout, and it was he who announced the findings of the meeting. When he had to negative a proposal, it was with the parliamentary formula, *Le roy s'avisera*. Externally the assembly must have closely resembled a session of parliament.

A considerable number of papers drawn up almost immediately after the conference are still extant, and there is one feature common to them all — their failure to deal with the problems of the day on a theological level. The "aggrieved party", those who pleaded for reform — they are seldom called puritans — usually submitted theological reasons for their complaints but they were seldom given a theological answer, or indeed any answer at all. There was, for example, much debate about the possibility of falling from grace. Some, including the king, thought that this was possible in a restricted sense. Others wanted the Lambeth Articles, which ruled this out, added to the Articles of Religion but this was rejected merely because it would make the Articles too long. The king did not agree but apparently had to bow to this view, but the theological problem was never discussed. The general defence of the establishment is likewise



non-theological. Order in the state, it is argued, depends on a graduated system of authorities, leading up to a single ruler at the top. All cases would thus come to the king, but as he could not deal personally with such a mass of business, he had to delegate it to subordinate officials, the bishops. Whatever the value of this argument, no scriptural authority is quoted for it. It might have been pointed out that "presbyterians" who sketched ideal constitutions, also visualised a pyramidal scheme of assemblies with a single authority at the apex.

Some of the numerous topics that came up at the Conference deserve special attention. One of these is the well-known anti-presbyterian slogan, "No bishop, no king". It is found in Barlowe's *Summe and Substance*, and there alone. It is skilfully introduced. In interrogating Dr Reynolds, the king demanded if he knew any who were opposed to his supremacy in the church. Reynolds, innocently walking into the trap, eagerly assured him that he knew none, and this was promptly turned against him. As experience in Scotland showed, "these men" were prepared to uphold the royal supremacy in order to persuade the king to abolish episcopacy, but the king would then find that he was helpless or, more accurately, has ceased to exist. "*No bishop, no king*, as before I sayde", and Reynolds had not a word to say in reply.

Yet the previous occasion in the course of the discussions, on which the king is said to have uttered this crushing retort, presents a different picture. In this instance, there were no trembling petitioners before him. There was no build-up to his outburst. The king, without any preliminaries, announced his disagreement with the text of Jerome that bishops are not of divine prescription, "which opinion his Majesty much distasted, and closed it up" (a favourite phrase of Barlowe's) "with this aphorism, No bishop, no King".<sup>12</sup> That the king ever used such words, we have no grounds for believing, except for Barlowe's assertion. In this context, they probably arose out of Bancroft's earlier controversy with Sir Francis Knollys. When he preached his Paul's Cross sermon in 1589 Bancroft was accused of having stated the divine origin of episcopacy in such a way as to call in question the queen's exclusive right to make bishops. In the ensuing controversy, someone, it seems, had produced this text from Jerome, so obviously inimical to the view put forward by Bancroft. This would explain why he is rather irrelevantly and obscurely dragged into the present passage. To allege that the king himself had publicly expressed disapproval of the text and declared himself in favour of "the calling and use" of bishops "in the church" would strengthen Bancroft against his opponents and

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 30. Davidson is said to have quoted this already in the king's presence as "an ordinary proverb". (Gillon, *Davidson of Prestonpans*, 194.)

would bring comfort to the rising Laudian school of divines. It seems likely that this was the origin of the phrase. It did not involve Scotland or the "presbyterians" but it could easily be employed in contexts other than the original one, for example, to give point to the king's alleged denunciation of presbytery as agreeing with monarchy as well as God and the devil.

Other topics which are said to have been raised included the provision of an adequate supply of preaching ministers, for Ireland as well as England. The king was whole-heartedly in sympathy with this demand, which some would regard as "puritan". On baptism by women, one report describes him as particularly bitter, "saying he had as leif an Ape as a woman should baptise his child".<sup>13</sup> Confirmation, absolution, the signing of the Cross, nonresidence, the ecclesiastical courts, were other subjects which came up over and over again without reaching any clear conclusion. Another topic keenly debated was excommunication, especially by lay chancellors. According to the *Declaration of the Conference*, the king was very firm about this and was supported by leading statesmen and lawyers. He "sayde that it was no reason that the Chancellors should hold any iurisdiction over Ministers or excommunication any way. To the which the Lord Cecill spake verie earnestly and pertinently, and so did the Lord Chancelor, and the Lorde Chiefe Justice".<sup>14</sup> This would seem to have settled the matter, but it is said to have been raised again. The petitioners stated their case at greater length and quoted statutes and canons already in force, limiting the powers of lay officials. But they were not allowed to develop their argument, as the king now announced that he had already conferred with the bishops and that order would be taken in this matter "as was convenient". This was the kind of answer that they were accustomed to receive from Queen Elizabeth and suggests that the same interested parties stood in the way of reform in both reigns.

The authorisation of a new translation of the Bible is generally regarded as the most notable achievement of the conference. According to the *Declaration of the Conference*, the revision of the Bible translations was "amongst those things which concern purity of doctrine" brought up by Reynolds. He gave a number of examples of mistranslation, "and the king freely gave assent that there should be one translation of the Bible consonant to the originall Greeke and Hebrew and", he added, "set forth without note". He is said to have quoted one example of a note, to which he objected, which stated that he ought to have put his grandmother (*sic*) to death as an idolater, and not merely deposed her. That all notes should be banned because one was too

13 Usher, *Reconstruction of the English Church*, ii, 338.

14 *Ibid.*, 343.



outspoken seems rather a drastic remedy, and, of course, the mere suppression of notes would not prevent readers from drawing their own conclusions, perhaps more damaging than any note.

This passage from the *Declaration* is reproduced by Barlowe with considerable expansion. The most notable passage, and the one most frequently quoted, is his attack on the Geneva Bible, an attack which is usually attributed to the king. According to Barlowe, James condemned all English translations as bad, but the Geneva as worst of all, that is, the worst as a rendering of the text, not on account of alleged subversive notes.<sup>15</sup> The caveat that there should be no marginal notes arose, according to Barlowe, "upon a word cast out by my Lord of London" (Bancroft) and was made necessary by the notes in the Geneva version, some of which (according to Barlowe) were "very partial, untrue, seditious, and savouring too much of dangerous and traitorous conceits". James is said to have seen the Geneva translation "in a Bible given him by an English lady". According to modern textbooks, she had presented it to him on his journey south, but it is possible that he had already seen it as printed in Scotland by Bassendine.

The background to this whole incident is that Elizabeth had left so many problems unsolved at her death, among them that of providing an up-to-date translation of the Scriptures. After the reign of Mary, there was a real need for Bibles to replace those that had disappeared during the previous reign, and there was an opportunity to revise those already available. Archbishop Parker had done his best and got the bishops to make such a revision, but he could obtain no authorisation or even encouragement from the court.<sup>16</sup> When she died, there were still a number of English Bibles available, none of them expressly authorised. There was a demand for a new translation and a uniform one. This came not only from reformers but also from their opponents, and when the request was renewed at Hampton Court, it was unanimously accepted, though with the proviso that it should be printed without notes. This was a proviso easy enough to carry out. Out of this resolution arose what is now called the Authorised Version. Readers are currently accustomed to see the Bible printed without notes (though not without page and chapter summaries which impose a certain view on the text) and they probably assume that there is somewhere an authoritative rule prohibiting notes. A reported agreement from the Hampton Court Conference hardly seems to carry sufficient authority.

<sup>15</sup> D. Daiches, *The King James Version of the English Bible* (Chicago, 1941), 51.

<sup>16</sup> See "Why 'Authorised?'" in M. A. Simpson, *What is Puritanism? and Other Essays*, published by the author in 1981.

The problem was complicated by the publication in 1560 of the Geneva Bible, which Barlowe was obviously out to denigrate. He has been extraordinarily successful in this, for a book which does not echo his allegations is hardly to be found. It has been made to bear the whole odium of the objectionable notes, but what the king and other members of the conference had in mind was clearly a revision of the Great Bible and the Bishops'. There was no apparent reason why the Geneva Bible should have been dragged in at all. The acrimony against it is hard to account for. It may have been rooted in commercial jealousy. The Geneva Bible was a private venture: its promoters had had to struggle to obtain a licence even to print it in England. But it was a resounding success, and this must have roused commercial interests to retaliate by persuading Barlowe to represent it as being condemned by the king.

Among the other questions submitted by the petitioners was that of using the sign of the cross in baptism. They wanted to know "how farre such an ordinance of the Church was to bind them, without impeaching their Christian liberty" — in modern language, what right has the church, or any other institution, to override men's conscience, or, conversely, how far should the rights of conscience prevail against the will of church or state? This is a profound and difficult question, but the discussion of it at Hampton Court cannot be described as satisfactory. The answer came not from the church or from anyone authorised to speak for it, but from the state, and it amounted to no more than this: that no answer would be given. *Le roy s'avisera*. The question is then dismissed as "smelling very rankly of Anabaptism" and the shocking example of Scotland is dragged in again. A "beardless boy", David Black by name, is said to have told the king there "that he would hold conformity with his majestie's ordinances for matters of doctrine: but for matters of Ceremonie, they were to be left in Christian liberty, to every man, as he received more and more light, from the illumination of God's Spirit". It cannot be claimed that the petitioners were dissatisfied with this answer, but they were firmly told by the king, "I will have one doctrine and one discipline, one Religion in substance and in ceremony: and therefore I charge you never to speake more to that point, how far you are bound to obey when the Church has ordained it". Any discussion of this problem was thus cut short.

A review of the evidence suggests the conclusion that the story of Hampton Court Conference, as it has been told for four centuries, was arrived at very rapidly indeed — in a matter of weeks, including the printing — but at the same time gradually and in well marked stages. It was a smooth development with no twists or contradictions. Immediately after the conference had

been adjourned by the king several reporters hastened to send off accounts of it to their friends or patrons. Two of these are preserved by Barlowe himself and are printed as a kind of appendix to his *Summe and Substance*.<sup>17</sup> They are obviously describing the same event and give the earliest hints of matters more fully developed in later statements. They are perhaps more reliable on that account. "Sir", opens the first of these papers, "I cannot conceale from you, the good successe, which it hath pleased God to sende us, by the Conference which his Majestie had with the Bishops at the court. . . . The Ministers come to the King on Monday at nine of the clocke. Honest People about the Court are comforted. Conformitans hang down their heads, and the bishops men curse the Puritanes. *Sic explicit*: I dies".

A third paper, which starts off in somewhat the same style, was printed by Daniel Neal in his *History of the Puritans*.<sup>18</sup> "Mr Galloway", he says, "who was present at the conference, gives this account of it to the presbytery of Edinburgh 'That on January 12, the King commanded the Bishops, . . . to advise among themselves, of the corruptions of the church, in doctrine, ceremonies and discipline; who after consultation reported, that all was well'" — a view which the king was far from accepting. Galloway, as reported by Neal, claims high authority for his account: "When sundry persons gave out copies of these actions, I myself took occasion as I was an ear and eye-witness to set them down, and presented them to his Majesty, who with his own hand mended some things, and eked others that I had omitted". The second day's conference is reported at considerable length and largely agrees with Barlowe's account, though conveying a different impression throughout. It is the most lively of the accounts. Galloway is mentioned as a participant, but as he is referred to in the third person, it seems that Neal is no longer quoting his words.

Yet another paper preserved by Barlowe<sup>19</sup> is of singular interest. It is headed, "Some of the speeches that are bruited upon or after Maister Doctor Reynolds returne to Oxon". This shows what is inherently probable, that the conference stimulated intense debate in the universities and no doubt in the Inns of Court and in Doctors' Commons as well. These "speeches" take the side of the petitioners, averring that the king "used the bishops with very hard words" but "used most kind speeches to" Dr Reynolds. These may have been some of the "copies" which Barlowe found slanderous and untrue and which had to be suppressed and replaced by others representing the other side of

<sup>17</sup> Usher, *Reconstruction of the English Church*, 338 ff.

<sup>18</sup> D. Neal, *History of the Puritans*, abridged in two volumes (London 1811), i, 323ff.

<sup>19</sup> Usher, *Reconstruction of the English Church*, 340 f.



the case. The universities would provide abundant material for doing this, and the results, it may be conjectured, are to be found in the longer papers already noted — the "Anonymous Account" and "a declaration of the conference". These are shorter papers than Barlowe's *Summe and Substance* but are livelier and commend themselves as sounder guides wherever there is a choice. The "Anonymous Account" especially reads like the product of a university, and is strongly polemical. "This is the Truthe and nothinge but the truthe, yf anie contradict this, you maie resist hym. . . . This is the Truimphe they so longe expected. Dr Reynolds and his brethren are utterly condempned for silly men".

Yet in spite of such emphatic denials, the debate, it may be conjectured, went on, and something stronger was called for. Dean Barlowe responded with his *Summe and Substance*, which tells the same story in his own way and to support his side of the argument. It is the longest of these papers, and its length is largely accounted for by additions of two sorts. The first consists of passages alleging the evil example of Scotland. One of these is the famous speech in which the king denounced presbytery and declared that it agreed with monarchy as well as God with the devil. This was not new to Barlowe, as it occurs in recognisably the same form in the *Declaration of the Conference*. It is found also in the *Anonymous Account*, though in a shorter form and without reference to Scotland. It may have been drawn from material accumulated by Bancroft ten years or more earlier, but the allusion to Scotland, afterwards so much elaborated, may have been added later. Barlowe's allusions are to more recent events in Scotland and have little to say about presbytery. In his opening oration, the king expressed his satisfaction in his present condition, "not as before a king without state . . . where beardless boys would brave him to his face". (A more sympathetic account might have read, "where even young ministers had the courage to stand up for the rights of the church".) The offender, as noted above, was David Black, who is said to have told the king that he was prepared to conform in matters of doctrine, but that in matters of ceremony ministers must be left in Christian liberty. This principle of the liberty of private men against the authority of the church is described as "the Scottish argument", not as "the presbyterian argument". When it was proposed that additions should be made to the [English] Articles of Religion, the king refused his assent, "bringing for example the course of M. Craig in the like case in Scotland". Craig's arguments had so bewildered simple people that they had fallen back into popery. English churchmen obviously did not want a similar lapse to occur among their people. When a new catechism was under discussion, the king gratuitously intervened with a reference to

"the number of ignorant catechisms set out in Scotland". The drunken helot is worked hard. He is always at hand to show the English what would happen if they followed a course disliked by their own shepherds.

The story, however, is amplified by Barlowe principally with adulation of king. James is portrayed as having dominated the whole conference; he issued judgments of superlative value; he never needed to be informed of the usages of his new kingdom; he already has a perfect mastery of them: "What is here set downe, for the truth thereof shall be justified. The onely wrong is to his Excellent Majesty, a syllable of whose admirable speeches, it was pittie to loose. . . ." Barlowe continues in this strain to the end:

"His Majesties gracious conclusion was so piercing, as that it fetched teares from some on both sides. My Lord of London ended all, in the name of the whole company with a Thanksgiving unto God for his Majesty, and a Prayer for the healthe and prosperity of his Highnesse, our gracious Queene, the young Prince, and all the Royal issue".

The result of all this flattery was the opposite of that intended. In modern eyes, it makes the king appear almost a buffoon. Even on Barlowe's showing, this is hardly fair. All the indications are that he took the conference seriously. He made arrangements for it to be held. He was diligent in attending, giving up three mornings for this purpose, and he actively participated in the discussions. Nor did he come with his mind made up in favour of one party. But what is most to his credit is that he allowed it to be held at all. Under his predecessor, the opposition had always succeeded in staving it off. An alleged desire to show off his learning is an inadequate explanation of his actions. He well knew what was going on in England. The distress of so many people there over the long-continued strife in the church must have been known to him, and he realised the desirability of reconciliation. Indeed, he made it clear that his aim was unity. It is, of course, true that by unity he meant only a united front against the Roman Catholics, but this was a limitation that he shared with most of his subjects.

The question is often asked why the conference was so barren of results. Actually, quite an impressive list can be drawn up of reforms agreed on, but they were mostly small and unobtrusive. No machinery existed to implement them. Even the promised new translation of the Bible was slow in getting under way and might never have been carried through at all. There was no one responsible for effecting it. It has been claimed that the execution of these reforms was entrusted to the bishops, who had opposed all change.<sup>20</sup> There is some truth in this view, but the documents

20 M. H. Curtis, "The Hampton Court Conference and its Aftermath", *History*, xlv, 1-14.

which have been examined suggest that the opposition was far stronger, far more determined and far more resourceful than this implies. Opposition from interested parties was only to be expected, but in this case the interested parties were unusually powerful and well equipped. There is abundant evidence that if there was a reforming party in the universities, there was also an opposition party. Cambridge produced Thomas Cartwright, but it also produced Whitgift who had him deprived and expelled, and the struggle had never abated. But even more formidable than the academics were the ecclesiastical lawyers. They were highly organised in the defence of their own privileges, and they had ample resources to carry on a campaign. From the beginning, they had fought against all reform, and they were not content to let the impression get abroad that their cause had suffered a check at Hampton Court. It may be conjectured that the production of accounts of the conference began in the universities and elsewhere almost immediately after it was adjourned. The earliest accounts did not achieve print, for it must be remembered that it was still common for letters, documents, even whole books to be published in manuscript. But a stage was quickly reached when it was decided to have a book on the subject and to circulate it in print; and there were people who were willing to pay for its production.

A glance at Barlowe's *Summe and Substance* will suggest that something like this must have happened. This is no hole-and-corner production. Compared with the *Brieffe discours off the Troubles begonne at Franckforde* or even with Bancroft's pamphlets, this is handsomely and expensively produced. It looks as if it were intended to circulate among the upper class and the well-to-do, and there may have been free copies in large numbers. It had an assured market from the beginning. The bishops and other dignified clergy, the ecclesiastical lawyers and the officials would all read it eagerly and recommend it to their friends. It was printed twice in 1604 and once in 1605, 1612, 1625 and 1638. Reprints began in 1707: one even appears in the *State Trials*, which is, however, an unofficial publication. It was widely diffused: even the comparatively small library in New College, Edinburgh, which does not specialise in English church history, has no fewer than three copies dating from 1625 and 1638. Barlowe's work still holds its prestige. Even Curtis is reluctant to speak of it in depreciatory terms. It has swamped all other accounts and must be held largely responsible for the extreme bitterness with which the reforming party have been viewed ever since.

The Hampton Court Conference did not fail. It was deliberately frustrated. The limited reforms which were aimed at from it were never allowed to take effect, and the result was that



when an opportunity again came to deal with the abuses of the church — in the Westminster Assembly — nothing would suffice but a complete and radical reconstruction.

